

(approved July 26, 2002)

**BOARD OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
FULL BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

APRIL 25, 2002

**HAWTHORN SUITES
321 BERCUT DRIVE
SACRAMENTO, CA**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Pines, MFT Member, Board Chair
Mark Burdick, LEP Member, Vice Chair
Glynis Morrow, Public Member
Roberto Quiroz, Public Member
Howard Stein, Public Member
Susan Ulevitch, LCSW Member

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Sherry Mehl, Executive Officer
Mary-Alice Coleman, Legal Counsel
Julie McAuliffe, Administrative Analyst

GUEST LIST ON FILE

The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:05 a.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Ms. McAuliffe called the role and a quorum was established.

**2. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION FROM THE OFFICE OF EXAMINATION
RESOURCES AND BOARD STAFF REGARDING THE ORAL EXAMINATION
PROCESS**

Ms. Mehl introduced Linda Hooper from the Office of Examination Resources (OER) and Christy Berger, Examination Analyst, from the Board. She indicated that Ms. Hooper is currently responsible for the development of our Marriage and Family Therapist oral examination and is very familiar with the detailed dynamics of the examination process. Ms. Berger is responsible for many aspects of the examinations including scheduling, training materials for examiners, and materials for candidates.

Ms. Hooper thanked the Board for the invitation and stated that the presentation would provide information on the development of the oral examination and an update on the proposal of implementing clinical simulations in lieu of the oral examination presented by Dr. Norman Hertz at the July 2001 Board meeting. She then stated that OER uses several documents in developing the examination, two of which are the 1999 Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing and the Department of Consumer Affairs Examination Validation Policy. The foundations for the psychometric considerations include the fact that the examination is based on an occupational analysis, standardized questions are used, a behavior-anchored rating criteria is established, and a structured vignette is utilized. The justification for the psychometric considerations include that the oral examination compliments the written examination, it assesses competencies that cannot be tested in a written format, and involves different subject matter than covered in academics and supervision. She indicated the user's perspective on the status of the oral examination is that it has a consistent pass and fail rate, there is widespread support for the examination, it adheres to high standards, and assesses knowledge needed for actual practice.

Ms. Mehl asked that Ms. Hooper and Ms. Berger elaborate on the selection process of those who assist in developing the examination. She indicated that the Board constantly recruits examiners and zip code sort's recruitment letters to areas where examiners are needed. Ms. Mehl stated that she and Board staff have noticed a recent problem with recruiting examiners. Ms. Berger explained the examiner application process. An applicant completes an application and a lead examiner interviews those that have met the required criteria. The lead examiner pays special attention to a person's motivation for becoming an oral examiner, and asks questions such as if they have supervised people in the past. Once an examiner is selected, they attend an eight-hour training conducted by lead examiners and Board staff. After initial participation in an oral examination, the examiners are required to attend a six-hour training, and then each year they are required to complete a four-hour training. A training manual is provided for each training. The main purpose of the training is to allow examiners to learn the process, to become calibrated to understand minimum competency and what it means in terms of the examination for each profession, to learn about how the examination was developed, and to understand how the examination must be administered in a standardized manner. They participate in a series of exercises which includes lectures, role-play, watching videos of examinations and rating the candidates, and the appropriate way of documenting each of their ratings and the reasons why they rated the way they did. This documentation is very important and assists in brainstorming ways of making each training better. Each training session evolves on a regular basis and is always improved. Ms. Mehl indicated that it is important to keep the oral examiners at a minimum competency level and that the trainings are always geared to assist in ensuring that examiners always rate a candidate by these standards.

Mr. Quiroz asked that Ms. Hooper comment on our current consistent pass/fail rate. Ms. Mehl explained that OER focuses on the process and development of the examination from a psychometric standpoint and does not look at the educational and experiential components that are all part of successful passage. One critical factor is determining what is a high or low pass rate and what is relative. The review of determining what is relative includes looking at the process for development of the examination and then looking at each component and determining that the Board is doing all that can be done to ensure a valid examination. Once these have been determined, other components such as the education and the experience gained

must be evaluated. The Board has been successful in enhancing the experience requirements and the newly formed Education Committee will begin looking at the Marriage and Family Therapist academic aspects of licensure. Ms. Hooper stated that the pass rate is group dependent.

Dr. Stein suggested that the Board might want to consider offering an open book examination to evaluate a person's comprehension and retention process. Ms. Pines stated that the oral examination truly tests the instantaneous response that is needed in clinical practice and practitioners do not generally have the occasion to use reference materials when addressing a crisis situation. Ms. Ulevitch stated that she is aware that the Board provides a multitude of written materials about both the written and oral examination, which includes the examination outline.

Ms. Hooper continued with her presentation and talked about the psychometrician's perspective of the oral examination. She indicated that the examination is a state-of-the-art instrument but there are concerns that relate to reliability and replicability of decisions and its continued utility as an examination.

In response to the replicability of the examination, Ms. Mehl stated that the Board has a formal appeal process in place as well as an in house informal appeal process for those applicants who have failed the examination by half a point. The examination is graded on a plus minus system and candidates are given the plus, or one point, when going into the examination, which is a standard procedure within psychometric applications.

Dr. Burdick stated that as a psychometrician, he thinks the Board will never be able to achieve an examination that includes an analysis of a person's ability to answer a particular scenario and be 100% free of subjectivity.

Ms. Hooper then stated that some possible misuses of the examination consist of the thought that the examination is a holistic evaluation of the candidate, it is a hiring interview for employment purposes, and it is a predictor of success without sufficient data. Additionally, she indicated that a candidate is given one vignette with one scenario, and that candidate may not be familiar with treating this type of problem or client and the clinical simulation proposal may address this problem.

OER proposes that the Board test written clinical simulations within the current written examination. This could satisfy the need for a supplemental oral examination to assess subject matter not tested in a written examination. She thought that by asking a number of scenario based questions, the Board would be able to assess a candidate's readiness for licensure. Ms. Mehl explained that the clinical simulations would include three or more vignettes with questions for each that cover the required content areas. Ms. Hooper indicated that the characteristics of the proposed simulations include that it will be vignette based, the content will be similar to the oral examination, the questions will be the same or similar to the oral examination, and they will be computer based. Ms. Hooper stated that OER would begin pilot testing within the Marriage and Family Therapist written examination, analyze the preliminary results, and present their findings at the November Board meeting.

One of the subjects the Board discussed was the issue of a standard pass rate. Ms. Mehl indicated that 65% is generally considered the standard pass rate of an examination. The fact that our pass rate is low doesn't necessarily mean there is a problem with the examination. There are additional factors, such as education and experience, that need to be considered. These factors are not always consistent and can vary from school to school.

Ms. Ulevitch thought that if the Board was able to implement a testing process that would test the same necessary skills and did not include subjectivity, that would be wonderful, but she did not think that the current pass rates were bad. Actually, she thought that they seemed to be in line with the standard pass rate.

Dr. Burdick questioned if the nature of the change was to take the same content that is now administered in an oral format and administer it in a written format. Ms. Hopper answered by stating that yes, the same vignettes and questions will be used and will be modified to administer it in a multiple choice format.

Ms. Mehl and Ms. Pines thanked Ms. Hooper and Ms. Berger for their presentation.

The Board recessed at 10:30 a.m.

The Board reconvened at 10:45 a.m.

Ms. Pines encouraged those who were unable to speak today to put their comments in writing and submit them to the Board.

Ms. Ulevitch asked that the professional associations encourage their members to be part of the examination process as examiners. Ms. Pines indicated that if the Board were to elect to change the format of the oral examination, there would still be a need for professionals to assist in the examination development.

Ms. Pines then stated that the Board would not be making any decision soon and candidates should continue to expect to participate in the oral examinations.

Mary Mallory, Director of the Marriage and Family Therapist degree program at Chapman University, spoke about the skills that are necessary for independent practice such as professional competency, oral skills, the ability to present oneself as a professional, think on one's feet and come up with a verbal responses and she was concerned that if the oral were reformatted into a written version, these necessary skills would be missed. She asked if there was a possibility of testing a candidate concurrently with an oral examiner to identify those necessary verbal skills. Ms. Mehl indicated that this process is in the preliminary stages and we are in the process of now determining if the clinical simulations can be tested effectively.

Ms. Mallory then asked who would be participating in the clinical simulations. Ms. Mehl explained that the clinical simulations would be pretest non-graded items on the current Marriage and Family Therapist written examination. Ms. Mallory suggested that we track the

candidates who participated in the clinical simulations through the oral examination process to determine their success.

Bill Baerg, registered Marriage and Family Therapist Intern, commented on the written and oral statistics and noticed that the statistics of first, second, and third time takers are fairly equal.

David Fox, Marriage and Family Therapist and coach of oral examination candidates, suggested that oral examiners be paid more, be required to take and pass the current examinations periodically, and be allowed to have dialog in the examination process. He also suggested that the Board survey examiners who were not released by the Board to determine why they are no longer examiners.

Ms. Morrow stated that she believes the and examiners would probably offer their services free of charge.

Ms. Mehl stated that the amount paid to examiners is \$135.00 per day and covers their expenses. Due to the shortages in mental health, we are having more difficulty recruiting oral examiners because they cannot commit the time that is needed since they are so busy with their full time positions. She then indicated that Board staff does a random elimination of examiners for each examination in order to maintain a fresh pool of examiners. Additionally, she indicated that we have attempted to obtain increases in our examination budget but have been unsuccessful in securing additional funds for anything other than the occupational analysis which is mandated by law.

Ms. Ulevitch suggested that the Examination Committee look at the issue of compensation of oral examiners. She thought that what people do with their heart is separate than what they do for their financial reasons. She asked that the work of the examiners not be considered volunteer work.

Dr. Stein asked that the Board consider researching Mr. Fox's issues regarding oral examiners.

A gentleman from an aerospace technology company addressed the Board regarding the fact that he recruits employees around the country and some employee's spouses are having difficulties with the oral examination process and becoming licensed in California. He referred to materials related to the July 26, 2001 presentation to the Board by Dr. Norman Hertz, formerly of the Office of Examination Resources, and to materials regarding the Board of Psychology's (BOP) decision to eliminate their oral examination as a requirement for licensure. Ms. Mehl interjected and clarified that our oral examination and BOP's oral examination are completely different examinations and should not be compared. He indicated that his legal counsel has reviewed our examination process, including the appeals process, and has come to the determination that more appeals should be overturned. He compared the licensure process with his industry process regarding hiring examinations. He indicated that his opinion is that the Board has come to the final point of offering an oral examination and asked that the Board consider other options of testing to determine minimal competency.

Ms. Ulevitch stated that the Board is committed to ensuring that the examinations for licensure are good, fair, competent examinations. She then stated that there are settings in California that are identified in law as exempt from licensure and that licensure is an elevated level of professional independent practice.

Mr. Quiroz indicated that the Board has received testimony both in favor of retaining the oral examination and in favor of replacing the examination with another format and the Board is really looking at balancing these issues and administering a fair examination. He then indicated that the issues regarding reciprocity arise all the time within the Board and in numerous employment settings and California is very diverse in comparison to other states. There are practices that are only relevant to California and the Board wants to ensure that they are testing what is appropriate for California practicing clinicians.

Mary Riemersma, Executive Director of the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists, addressed some historical issues regarding the oral examination. She stated there have been significant changes in the examination process including the ways of scoring and the descriptors of categories and these things have assisted in the increase of the pass rate. She then indicated that California has over 25,000 licensees, more than all other states combined, and national examinations do not address the issues that are critical for practice in California. She asked how the Board de-selects examiners. Ms. Mehl indicated that the Board has a random selection process and this process is used to keep the pool consistent so, an examiner can be doing a fine job and still be selected out. Some specific reasons why some examiners are selected out of the process entirely include committing to attend an examination and then not showing up, canceling at the last minute, and performance issues that are documented by the lead examiner that constitutes a problem with the examiner. Dr. Burdick mentioned that consistent inter rater reliability and wide discrepancies are another reason for dismissal as an examiner. Ms. Riemersma thanked the Board for looking at this issue very carefully and acknowledged that there are many difficulties within the oral examination and appreciates the Board's constant efforts to improve the examinations.

Mary Jo Brooks, registered Marriage and Family Therapist, indicated that she has failed the oral examination several times and was curious about the process. She works in a very serious, critical care clinical setting and indicated that there is much riding on obtaining a license and she thought that a panel interview process may be a better way of testing a person's capabilities. She asked how the Board calibrates an oral examiner. Ms. Mehl stated that part of the examiner training process includes determinations that examiners are familiar with the rating anchors and the different theoretical perspectives.

Geraldine Esposito, Executive Director of the California Society for Clinical Social Work, stated that she approved of and complimented the Board on their intense review of the oral examination process.

Jan Lee Wong, Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), commended the Board on their process of identifying the issues regarding the oral examination and for being so detailed in their process. The Association's members seem to be split. Some are in favor of replacing the oral examination and others are in favor of retaining the

examination. He then stated that NASW would like to work with the Board to recruit new examiners and indicated that diverse examiners are needed.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:05 p.m.